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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARP (TROBERTS), NEA/PPD (CWHITTLESEY), NEA/P
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LONDON FOR GOLDRICH
PARIS FOR ZEYA
USCENTCOM FOR PLUSH
FOREIGN PRESS CENTER/ASILAS

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TAGS: [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#) [OIIP](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: MUSCAT MEDIA REACTION: IRAQ, POWELL, SYRIA, SHARM AL-SHAIKH, U.S. ELECTIONS

Electing To Move Forward

[1](#)1. The lead editorial in the government-owned Arabic daily "Oman" on November 29 was entitled "The Iraqi Elections":

"The election in Iraq can be seen as a bottleneck, beyond which the country may be able to rebuild itself under the sheltering umbrella of a permanent constitution and representative government. Iraq's interests are of paramount concern, and the difficult aspects of the election must not be neglected. There should be a reasoned analysis of the issues, free from special interests or personal desires. Seventeen political parties and civil organizations requested the postponement of the election; this request should be seriously considered, because it remains such a vital event for Iraqis. The election should be a step toward peace, stability, and national unity. A successful election will pave the way for Iraq to return to the international community, and regain its position as a vital player in the region and in the world as a whole."

Hawks and Doves

[1](#)2. Essa bin Mohammed Al-Zadjali, owner and editor-in-chief of the English daily "Times of Oman" and Arabic daily "Al-Shabiba," wrote an editorial that appeared in both newspapers on November 28 entitled, "Colin Powell: The Last Of The Moderates":

"The resignation of Secretary of State Colin Powell has met with conflicting reactions both inside the U.S. and in the world at large. Powell stood tall in the administration because he chose a moderate style in running U.S. foreign policy over the last four years. Obviously, this moderate stance created many confrontations between Powell and some of the hawks on the Bush team. His policy of dialogue was often obstructed and countered by such senior officials as Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice. Powell was the last moderate in the Bush administration. He outlined a complete map for U.S. foreign policy that gained wide acceptance throughout the world. U.S. foreign policy during the second term of the Bush presidency will remain an area of concern for U.S. allies abroad."

Farsighted?

[1](#)3. Another editorial appeared in "Oman" on November 26 entitled "Syria's Vision":

"After meeting with President Bashar al-Asad, United Nations Middle East envoy Terje Roed-Larsen confirmed that Syria is ready to negotiate with Israel without preconditions. This surely indicates the vision and foresight of the Syrian leadership, for Syria has been trying to redefine its relationships with other countries, particularly Lebanon. Syria's willingness to talk would appear to remove any pretexts for the Israelis to refuse to sit at the negotiating table. However, the Israelis immediately belittled the announcement, saying it was merely an effort to curry favor with the United States."

Failed Conference

[1](#)4. Privately-owned Arabic daily "Al-Watan" carried an editorial on November 24 entitled "The Sharm Al-Shaykh Conference":

"The participants in the Sharm Al-Shaykh conference failed to address two important issues: how to deal with the superpower that invaded Iraq, and how to agree upon a legitimate plan to secure that superpower's withdrawal from the country. Because of this failure, the Americans will once again get their way. The participants in the conference appeared intent on avoiding any mention of the invasion, as if there were no occupying forces in

Iraq."

Democracy In Action

15. An Egyptian writer, Dr. Abdul Aziz Hamooda, contributed an op-ed piece to "Oman" on November 23 under the headline "America The Beautiful":

"Let me assure you that I am not so blinded that I cannot detect the weak points of the American democratic system. However, I refuse to reject the American model as a whole, since its stability has lasted for more than 100 years and has made America into an economic, political, and cultural superpower. Despite all the negative aspects of the American model of democracy, the entire world witnessed a happy American election on November 2. U.S. presidents do not receive 90%, 80%, or even 60% of the vote; President Bush received 51% and his opponent 48%. Millions of people in the third world saw American voters heading to the polls without fear. I have personally witnessed a father and son voting for one candidate, and a mother and daughter voting for another candidate, without threatening the unity of the family."

BALTIMORE